Census on the Alligator population

222. PROF. ALKA BALRAM KSHATRIYA:
SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has recently decided to conduct the first ever census on the Alligator population in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether large number of Alligators had died in the past few months in mysterious circumstances in the National Chambal Sanctuary;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the details of steps taken to check such rising deaths of Alligators in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI S. REGUPATHY): (a) and (b) Alligators are not found in India. However, census of Gharials are conducted on a regular basis. As per the last census conducted in 2007, the estimated number of Gharials in various Sanctuaries has been about 1645.

(c) and (d) As per the information available, around 105 Gharials have been reported dead during the period between 8.12.2007 and 21.2.2008. No particular reason could be attributed to this mortality of Gharials. However, possibility of nephro-toxin entering via the food-chain could not be ruled out.

(e) The important steps taken by the Government to check the Gharial mortality are as follows:

(i) The Ministry of Environment & Forests has constituted a Crisis Management Group to coordinate the efforts to control Ghariyal mortality.

(ii) Expertise of international experts has been obtained for the investigation purpose. Tissues/Blood samples have been sent for laboratory investigations.

(iii) Immediate financial assistance to the tune of Rs. 12.08 lakhs has been provided to the State of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh for mitigation of Gharials mortality apart from grant of Rs. 27.295 lakhs for the National Chamballs Gharial Sanctuary, for the year 2007-08.

(iv) Breeding of Gharials in captivity has been successfully standardized and as and when required, captive breed Gharials are released in wild also.

(v) All efforts have been made by the State Government to stop illegal sand mining thus avoiding any damage to the habitat of Gharials. Further, Inter-State collaboration amongst the States of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh are taken up for conservation & management of Gharials and their habitats.

Regulatory regime on wetlands

223. MS. PRAMILA BOHIDAR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is proposed to bring in a regulatory regime on wetlands in the country to protect lakes and other water bodies now facing different kinds of encroachments/threats;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the total number of such bodies in the country, *inter-alia* those that are located in Orissa State;

(d) whether for their maintenance and up-keep, the Centre proposes to provide some financial relief to Orissa Government; and

(e) if so, the details, thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Recognizing the value of Wetlands and taking cognizance of the fact that there does not yet exist a formal system of Wetland Regulation, the National Environment Policy (NEP), 2006, as approved by the Cabinet in May 2006 sought to set up a legally enforceable regulatory mechanism for identified valuable Wetlands to prevent their degradation and enhance their conservation. A series of meetings were held by the Multi Disciplinary Expert Group constituted for this purpose. The Expert Group prepared its recommendations on the Categories of Wetlands for Regulation Process and Procedure for Identification, Composition of Regulatory Authority, Functions of the Authority, and Activities to the Regulated. A draft notification is proposed to be brought out under the provisions of the Environment Protection Act, 1986.

(c) to (e) At present, 103 wetlands have been identified under National Wetland Conservation Programme, out of which four wetlands, *viz.*, Chilika, Kanjia, Kunaria and Daha wetlands are located in Orissa. Since the notification is still in the draft form, modalities of maintenance and upkeep will be worked out after its finalization. Draft Notification, after approval, will be put on the Ministry's website for comments of experts/State Governments. After incorporating inputs from various agencies and approval by Department of Legal Affairs, the draft notification will be notified under provisions of Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

Improper care of Animals/Birds during the shooting of Jodha-Akbar

224. SHRI SHANTARAM LAXMAN NAIK: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that some of the animals and birds used for the shooting of Hindi feature film "Jodha-Akbar" died/fell sick on account of improper care of these animals/ birds;

(b) whether Government has issued any guidelines in such matters;

(c) whether Government had received any complaint in the matter;

(d) if so, the substance of the complaint; and

(e) the action taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) No, Sir. No such incident was brought to the notice of the Central Government during the shooting of the film.

(b) The Central Government has made 'Performing Animals (Registration) Rules, 2001' amended as 'Performing Animals (Registration) Amendment Rules, 2002' under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 to deal with such matters.